

REMARKS

By this Reply, claims 1 and 5-10 have been amended, claims 2-4 and 11 have been canceled, and new claims 12-20 have been added. Accordingly, claims 1, 5-10, and 12-20 are pending in this application. The amendments are fully supported by the application as originally filed, and no new matter has been introduced by this Reply.

In the outstanding Office Action, the specification was objected to, claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by “Maintenance Technique Using RBI/RBM” to Shigemitsu Kihara (“Kihara”); claim 11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kihara in view of Japanese Patent Publication No. 2000-259222 to Tomoyuki (“Tomoyuki”); and claims 4-10 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Applicant gratefully acknowledges the indication of allowable subject matter.

The Examiner provided a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 4-10. Although Applicant agrees with the Examiner’s ultimate conclusions that claims 4-10 include allowable subject matter because the prior art does not teach or suggest the features set forth in the claims, Applicant does not necessarily agree with each and every characterization and assertion contained in the Examiner’s statement. Therefore, unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicant declines to subscribe to any statement or characterization contained in the statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 4-10.

In response to the Examiner’s objection to Applicant’s specification, Applicant has attached a replacement abstract for the Examiner’s approval. The proposed replacement abstract incorporates changes consistent with the Examiner’s suggestions

on page 2 of the Office Action. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner approve and enter the replacement abstract and withdraw the objection to the specification.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to include the features of claim 4, which the Examiner has indicated as including allowable subject matter, and claims 2 and 3. Applicant has also canceled now superfluous claims 2-4. Accordingly, independent claim 1 is in condition for allowance. In addition, claims 5-10 are also in condition for allowance, at least due to their dependence from allowable claim 1. Each of claims 5-10 also recites unique combinations that are neither taught nor suggested by the cited art, and therefore each is also separately patentable. Claims 1 and 5-10 have also been amended to provide proper antecedent basis and for clarity. The rejections of claims 1-3 under § 102(b) and claim 11 under § 103(a) are now moot.

New independent claim 12 has been added and includes the features of originally filed claims 1 and 4. The Examiner has indicated that claim 4 includes allowable subject matter. Accordingly, independent claim 12 is in condition for allowance. New claims 13-20, which depend from independent claim 12, have also been added and include similar features as claims 2, 3, and 5-10 as originally filed. Thus, claims 13-20 are in condition for allowance, at least due to their dependence from allowable claim 12. Each of claims 13-20 also recites unique combinations that are neither taught nor suggested by the cited art, and therefore each is also separately patentable.

The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicant does not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicant declines to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

In discussing the specification, claims, and drawings in this Reply, it is to be understood that Applicant is in no way intending to limit the scope of the claims to an exemplary embodiment described in the specification or abstract and/or shown in the drawings. Rather, Applicant is entitled to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

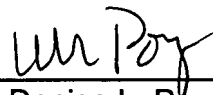
If the Examiner believes a telephone conversation might advance prosecution, the Examiner is invited to call Applicant's undersigned agent at 202-408-4129.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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GARRETT & DUNNER, L.L.P.

Dated: June 19, 2007

By: 
Denise L. Poy
Reg. No. 53,480

Attachment: One (1) Replacement Abstract